

On Saturday, November 7, at about 11 pm, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 3962, the House health care bill, by a vote of 220 – 215.

The vote followed an extensive national debate about the state of America's health care system. Over the past several weeks, thousands of Nebraskans have shared with me their thoughts on the matter. Some have raised heartfelt concerns regarding challenges of affordability and the need for reasonable reforms. Many have expressed deep unease about plans to drastically change health care financing and the implications on public costs and quality of care.

No one disputes the diagnosis--we must strengthen health care in America. We must improve health outcomes for all Americans and reduce costs, especially for families and small businesses, while protecting vulnerable persons. The question is what will be most effective.

The House bill is very risky. It is a mind-numbingly complex and costly prescription, nearly 2,000 pages long with a cost of \$1.3 trillion. While I agree we should promote a health care culture that focuses on wellness and prevention, remove lifetime caps on care, and help those with pre-existing conditions, this bill will not meet the test of reducing costs, nor is it likely to improve the quality of care. Instead, it will simply shift costs to more government run health care and reduce health care liberties. For these reasons, I voted against the measure.

So, where should we go from here? To fill the gaps of coverage, I believe we should adopt a number of commonsense reforms, such as portability of insurance, buying insurance across state lines, and creating new insurance association models for farmers and families for more affordable options. Also, by better promoting health and wellness incentives, we could save hundreds of billions of dollars. By enhancing existing public services such as community health centers and hospice reimbursement, combined with expanding high risk pools for those with pre-existing conditions, we can provide more cost-effective avenues of care for vulnerable persons and those who do not fit neatly into existing insurance models. It would have been helpful if these and other creative ideas to address the underlying drivers of health care costs were allowed to be included in the House debate to effectively address the circumstances that have led to our current situation.

I have appreciated the extensive feedback provided to my office on this critical matter. Thank you for your input. To find more of my thoughts on health care reform, including the latest statements and speeches, visit my website at Fortenberry.house.gov.